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Thesis

OLIVE SCHREINER, THE WRITER OF SOUTH AFRICA

Submitted by

Grace Gatchell

(A.B., Colby College, 1897)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

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OLIVE SCHREINER

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OLIVE SCHREINER

The Writer of South Africa

To be born at an isolated missionary station in the wilderness of South Africa would hardly be counted an advantage. Yet put the creative mind along with a determined spirit where you will, and if it can find any food it will grow, and given half an opportunity it will declare itself. For Olive Schreiner what might seem to have been most disadvantageous proved to be most fortunate. The great stretches of African desert and African sky, the ox-wagon trails winding over the sands, the Boer farms, and Kaffir huts gave her a new background and nomenclature for her stories and novels, offered unlimited scope for her imagination, gave her quiet and long hours for deep thinking and serious reading. It was, therefore, with a new voice that she spoke to the world, and it was the first and is even today the only voice to tell of South African life. It foretold a new day of greater independence for women, and a broader religion that would come when men followed scientific fact and truth as actually revealed to them instead of clinging to legends and out-grown creeds. Never was there a woman more free from the restraints of convention. She saw with her own eyes, thought her own thoughts and decided for herself in all matters, social, political, and religious, and in reaching her decisions she gave weight only to spiritual values.

Her life began in 1855 at the Wittenbergen Native Reserve Missionary Station, Basutoland, South Africa, where her father, Gotlieb Schreiner, as the resident Wesleyan missionary, had been stationed the year before. Mr. Schreiner had been sent to South Africa in 1838 by the London Missionary Society, the same that in 1858 sent out David Livingstone. At the station there were only a house and the church. These were situated on a flat rocky plateau at the foot of the Wittenbergen (White Mountains). Behind them rose a mountain to the elevation of 8,000 feet, showing a great white stone cliff, or krantz, that ran along its side; in front was another krantz dropping down seventy feet. Olive has thus described her birthplace: "The house on the very edge of a high cliff or krantz of pure rock, perched as I have seen no other house in all my wanderings on the very edge of the rocks like an eagle's nest. I think from the position, I have acquired that passionate love of rocks and precipices which has followed me all my life and been stronger than any other feeling I have for natural aspects except for the sky and stars."[1]

Her mother, Rebecca Lyndall Schreiner, was a pretty, well-educated, and cultured English woman. Swept away by the romantic idea of being a missionary's wife, she had married Gotlieb Schreiner, a young German, who was in London

1 Life p. 61

trying to arrange for an assignment to a distant post with the Missionary Society. What life in South Africa at the isolated mission posts meant to this refined young woman, we can only imagine. Her husband was visionary and impractical, but sincere and devoted, throwing himself whole heartedly into his work with the Kaffirs and Hottentots. Olive was their ninth child and the sixth surviving. The two oldest girls, Kate and Alice, left home early and married young, and Frederick, the oldest boy, was sent to England to school in 1853. There were, however, always four or five children in the Schreiner home when Olive was growing up, Will, Olive, Ettie, Theo, and the little sister Ellie who lived only three years. Olive felt that this little sister belonged to her, and the child's death touched her so deeply that she never ceased to mourn for her. It also set her to pondering on the meaning of death. Young as she was, she threw aside the faith and teaching of her father and began to work out her own belief.

If we are to understand, even in some slight way, the life of Olive Schreiner, who became the great woman, it is well to stop and consider the influences of her early surroundings--the mountain with its white stone belt towering near, the great stretch of yellow veld extending from the foot of the precipice in front of the house to the horizon,

and the measureless sweep of the sky. "In the bush the wood doves cooed to one another, and the cock-o-veets called; the little gray, long-tailed monkeys climbed the trees and slid down by the monkey-ropes; the hares and porcupines visited the lands at night by the great dam; and the leopard sometimes came down on very dark nights to prowl about the kraals; and snakes made their nests and reared their young in the garden and under the dam walls. The great flat stone lay still baking in the sun on hot days; and the trap-door spiders made lids to their nests and lined them with white silk and opened and shut them,-------: and the avond-bloem in the grass on the mountain opened their drab-tinted flowers and sent their rich sweet scent far and wide."[1] Hottentots and Kaffirs were the missionary's only neighbors. Hundreds of miles stretched between him and any port, and could be traversed only in the slow ox-cart. Life was primitive in every way. The floors were natural rock, the furniture was homemade, and swallows nested in the rafters. Mail, supplies, and visitors came very infrequently. But in the sight of the great expanse of veld by day and of the starry sky by night, the mind of this child Olive expanded and her fancy roamed wide. "One of my earliest memories," she writes, "is of walking up and down on the rocks behind

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1 "Man to Man" p. 64

the little Mission House in which I was born and making believe that I was Queen Victoria and that all the world belonged to me."[1] "One can almost see," writes Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner, "the vivid, dark, strange six-year-old child sitting at the edge of the firelight, her large and wonderful eyes intensely and silently absorbed in the world about her"[2]--a world that provoked long, long thoughts, so that by the time she was ten years old she had thought out her religious belief and defined herself a free thinker, and was thinking deeply on other subjects and thinking them out to an end.

When Olive was six years old, the Schreiners moved to Healdtown. The change necessitated a long journey by wagon over the desert and out-spanning at night under the open sky or at the hospitable home of some Boer farmer. At Healdtown we find Olive continuing her habit of walking up and down, making stories, and talking them aloud to herself. She was at this early age keeping a journal, and the children now had for the first time a tutor. He, a Mr. Ford, was with them only a short time; therefore practically all the training and instruction the children got came from their mother. The Bible was their chief book and Olive could recite long passages from it. Once in her

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1 Thoughts on S.A., Intro. p. 15
2 Life p. 65

reading she came upon the fifth chapter of Matthew. She read it eagerly. Here was the guide to right living. She ran to her mother exclaiming, "Look what I've found! Look what I've found!", but her mother, who was talking with a caller, shocked the child by her indifference to such a vital discovery.[1]

Her father soon lost his position as missionary because he failed to adhere to the letter of the law about trading with the Natives, and, lacking practical business ability, he was unable to do anything for his growing family. We have Olive's word for it that her father did not support her after she was eleven years old.[2] When she was twelve, she went to live with her brother Theo, who was then master of the public school at Cradock. Ettie and Will, it seems, were also with Theo. During the three years that followed Olive was made miserable by the persecution of her older brother and sister, who were very dogmatic in their religion and felt it their duty to bring their straying sister back into the fold of the church. Olive, however, stood firm. She refused to attend church services and clung to her own belief. In 1870, about the time her brothers joined the rush to the Diamond Fields, she went into service as a governess.

One of the children of the family she entered, later

1 Life p. 67
2 Life p. 72

Lady Crew, has written of her that when she came she was "extremely lovely. The idea was that she should help us with our lessons, but she was in a very highly nervous state, slept badly and went for long walks and rides, and the plan fell through. We were all fascinated by her gift for writing the most thrilling stories, which went on from day to day."[1] Mrs. John Hemmings, who knew her well, gives us this description of her when she was fifteen: "At this time she was small and slight with a lovely smooth skin, bright color, large soft dark eyes, beautiful eyes; masses of soft brown hair, the color of her eyes; very clever and bright; she talked brilliantly, got very excited at times and to me was most fascinating. She loved children and would spend hours talking to them and telling them stories.---------She was very restless, for many nights walking up and down her room nearly all night, talking to herself, often crying, then suddenly laughing; once or twice never going to bed at all."[2] "I think", wrote the Rev. Zadoc Robinson, "that it was about 1870 that Olive came for an extended visit.---------She had everything that makes for charm in a social gathering. Her eyes, her voice, which in laughter became music, her gay mirthfulness of disposition, the ready and easy flow of language with ideas that seemed to come to her lips with a gladsome speed and

1 Life p. 78
2 Life p. 79

fulness, made her conversation sparkling and suggestive. She seemed fitted to dominate any social circle, and she did it apparently without effort.--------It was her joyful vocation to charm her guests. In all this there was never anything frivolous or shallow. You felt that she had read and she had thought."[1] According to this same Mr. Robinson, Olive's ideas on the supernatural in religion, on the uselessness of the church service in marriage were already crystalized. We also learn that Olive was reading Herbert Spencer and a volume of sermons which she found in Mr. Robinson's library.

Sometime after this visit, probably in September 1872, Olive went to Hertzog where her father was then living, and in November she set out for the Diamond Fields to join Will and Ettie. She now read Mill's "Political Economy" a second time, Darwin's "Descent of Man", Buckle's "History of Civilization", Russel's "History of Heroes of Medicine", and was writing out some of her stories. It was at this time also that she suffered her first attack of asthma, a trouble from which she suffered the rest of her life, and which at last made her an invalid and indirectly caused her death. Before she began to have these asthmatic attacks, she had been in perfect health and for

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1 Life p. 86

years afterward she would seem perfectly well between attacks.

From Kimberley she went to Fraserburg to visit her sister Alice, meeting here Dr. and Mrs. Brown, who were to prove two of her best and life-long friends. "She spent," writes Mrs. Brown in an account of this visit, "much time with him (Dr. Brown) for he understood the eager aspirations of that ardent young spirit, and entered into her hopes and plans. She wanted to study medicine, to go out into the wider fields of knowledge and liberty of thought and action. Her 'heresies' and unorthodox views met a response in his large and liberal spirit. She said he was one of the few who understood."[1] In a letter that Olive wrote to Mrs. Brown years after, she said, "You and Dr. Brown at Fraserburg were like two stars that shone in my sky when all the rest was dark."[2]

From Fraserburg she went to Cape Town and from there she returned to her father's home in Hertzog. From Kimberley to Fraserburg the distance, as she had to travel, is nearly five hundred miles, from Fraserburg to Cape Town is over two hundred miles, and from Cape Town up to Hertzog involves a trip by boat to Port Elizabeth, and from there home a distance of nearly two hundred miles. When one recalls

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1 Life p. 97
2 Life p. 97

that those overland journeys had to be taken in a coach or cart and that the roads were rough and sometimes made impassible by heavy rains and floods, one can understand how it was that Olive Schreiner knew the South African country and could write vividly about it.

Again her stay at home was very short, and in May 1874, she was filling a position of governess at Colesberg. She spent a very unhappy year here, working from early morning until late at night, superintending the house, teaching the children, tending store, and sewing all the evening. Her next move was to Klein Ganna Hoek, a farm belonging to a Boer family, the Fouches, where she had charge of several children. Olive wrote Kate that Theo offered to pay her travelling expenses home and her board there if she wished to live with her father and mother, but her belief that "a woman should not be dependent on her friends any more than a man should"[1] compelled her to refuse her brother's offer. Concerning her life at this time Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner observes, "For all her genius and intellect Olive was in many ways peculiarly unfitted for the struggle of life. Not only did her intellect not function well in certain directions (especially in business); it actually unfitted her for almost all kinds of work except the expression of that ideal world which gives her writings their

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1 Life p. 103

fascination and strength. Add to this her inability to judge people, her spontaneous outgoing, almost childlike attitude to people until her suspicions were aroused; the instantaneous expression if only in face, of her powerful, often violent and rapidly varying emotions; her absorption in her ideas and her consequent absent-mindedness;--all these and many other strange traits, which made close continual personal intercourse almost impossible, might have justified fully the greatest anxiety on the part of those who sent her out into the world. Such a person was as ill-qualified for the work-a-day world as almost anyone could be."[1]

Klein Ganna Hoek is in a part of the country closely associated with the later years of Olive Schreiner's life and where she today lies in the sarcophagus on Buffels Kop. Olive's duties now left her time to walk, to think, and to write. It was at Klein Ganna Hoek that she wrote much of an unpublished novel, "Undine", and some of "The Story of an African Farm". Though Mrs. Fouche was kind, she would not allow her governess any more candle than was necessary to light her to bed, and consequently Olive did much reading and writing by moonlight. She read her manuscripts to Mrs. Cawood, a friend on the adjoining farm,

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1 Life p. 100

who used to ask her why she didn't publish her stories. One of the Cawood children, now Mrs. Stanley, gives us a description of Olive which emphasizes the same points that everyone noticed: her small size, her quick intelligent eye, her beauty and her restless and eccentric ways.[1]

Cradock was the town for Klein Ganna Hoek, and fortunately for this eager young mind it had a good library, and she read at this time "Prometheus Unbound", Spencer's "First Principles", Ouida's "Tricontrin", Mill's "Logic", Ruskin's "Crown of Wild Olive", Emerson's "Essays", Huxley's "Lay Sermons", and Darwin's "Plants and Animals."

Because of the small salary, Olive was not content to stay on with the Fouches, and secured a position with the Martins of Ratel Hoek. She was now very much interested in her novels, "Undine" and "Thorn Kloof", which Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner feels sure is another name for "The Story of an African Farm",[2] and was thinking of publishing a book. But her asthma troubled her badly here. Her journal shows that her spirits were low and her writing weighed on her like a great load even though it was the thing in which she was most interested and she had come to love her characters.[3] Her days were occupied with teaching the children, helping her mistress, nursing some sick member of the family though

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1 Life p. 113
2 Life p. 123
3 Life p. 115, 118, 142

often too sick herself to do more than was required of her, and always trying to read and write. She was in the very grip of her great novel and the revision required great labor. No wonder that at times the girl almost lost heart. When, however, the weather changed and the asthma left her, she would set to work with renewed hope. Meantime a very definite purpose was forming in her mind. She realized her limited education and lack of opportunity. She would take her meagre savings--perhaps the most she ever earned was fifty-five pounds a year--and her manuscripts and go "home", for her mother's England was likewise home to her.

Soon her dream was realized. Early in 1881 she was on her way. Before sailing she went to Grahamstown to visit her mother, who after Gotlieb Schreiner's death had embraced the Catholic faith and entered a convent. Here Olive made the following entry in her journal: "I left Lilly Kloof (where she had been living with the Martins) on the 10th of February, 1881, in an ox-wagon with Kaffir leader and driver. Was sick all the way. Arrived here on a rainy Friday evening. Found Mamsy at the Convent, and got letters from Mrs. Brown, Will, Ettie and John Pursglove. Have been sick since I came here. Have suffered agony. If ever I get well again I shall pity anew."[1]

Another entry of March nineteenth written at sea reads:

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1 Life p. 144

"I have not much hope, I shall never be well. I do hope Fred or Will will meet me tomorrow. I have no hope in the future, but I will strive. I will."[1] We would do well to dwell on this picture of Olive Schreiner, now twenty-six years old, suffering agony from pain in her chest and heart, and yet clenching her fists and saying "I will, I will", rather than allowing the stories and visions that filled her mind to go untold.

At the time Olive went to England, the Schreiner family had already begun to make a name for itself. Frederick Schreiner, Olive's oldest brother, had lived in England ever since the age of thirteen, he had been sent there for his education. He had opened and built up New College at Eastbourne, which had become a very prosperous school. Will, the brother two years younger than Olive, had won the Jameson Scholarship at the South African college and had come to Cambridge to take his M.A. and M.L. degrees, and was a leader in his legal studies. Later he returned to South Africa and early "passed to a great and solid success at the Bar."[2] In 1914 he was sent to England as High Commissioner for the Union, where he died in 1919. Theo, who was ten or twelve years Olive's senior, had, like his brother Frederick, been educated in England. After his return home

1 Life p. 145
2 Life p. 48

he had, as we have seen, taught school in Cradock. The diamond rush then swept him along, but he met with no success in his panning. Finally he drifted into politics and advanced so that when his brother Will was sent to England as Commissioner, he took his place as one of the four nominated Senators of the Union. On the question of religion and on the rights of the Boers at the time of the Boer War, he was directly opposed to Olive. Once in speaking to Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner of his family, Will Schreiner said that all the others mattered only as they were related to Olive. Though this was a very modest statement, it shows that the little sister by her hard work and determination to keep on striving not only placed herself at the head of this accomplished family, but placed herself high in the history of South Africa, and won a permanent place among the great writers of the English language.

Due in part to poor health but especially to a natural aversion to the work, Olive soon gave up the idea of studying medicine or training for a nurse, and with the assistance of Dr. and Mrs. Brown gave her attention to the publication of "The African Farm". The first edition appeared in 1883, bearing the name of Ralph Iron. It immediately arrested attention and provoked comment, both favorable and adverse. It deals with the very questions that are stirring the public mind in the second quarter of

this twentieth century, the question of religious freedom of thought, and the problem of the relation of men and women, both sexual and social. When we see how these subjects are received by the more conservative readers today, we cannot be surprised to hear that "The Story of an African Farm" was a highly disturbing, as well as entertaining novel in its day. Gladstone read it, sitting up until the light of dawn colored the sky to finish it. His enthusiasm led him to recommend it to the Rev. Canon MacColl, who wrote an attack on "the agnostic novel".[1] George Meredith praised it. It sold well in England, America, and South Africa and soon came to be recognized as a work of genius.

"The Story of an African Farm" is a seemingly simple record of the lives of several people who live on an African farm, doing their homely tasks, having native Africans for neighbors and servants, knowing isolation and lack of opportunity, seeing the great stretch of blue sky above them and the hot plains about them by day, and the wide heavens and bright stars at night. The persons are Tant' Sannie, who runs the farm; her step-daughter, Em; a niece, Lyndall; and old Otto, the German overseer; and his son, Waldo. Bonaparte Blenkins soon comes into the story, and later Gregory Rose and the two strangers, one being called Waldo's stranger and the other Lyndall's. The book is

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1 Life p. 191

different from the ordinary novel. It is more like an actual account of the lives of these people, some come from--we know not where, and go--we know not where. Our interest is not centered in one character, but rather one character after another takes its place in the light and then steps back into the shadow. In telling her story Olive Schreiner has no fear of the truth, neither of gross brutality, nor of the supreme beauty as she sees it in the solemn monotony of the great plain.

On the night the story opens, everyone slept except little Waldo, the son of Old Otto, the overseer. The boy was a thinker and on this night he was agonizing with his thought; a man died and went to Hell every time his father's great silver hunting watch ticked, "for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in thereat." In imagination the sensitive boy watched the countless millions going over the dark edge of the world until he could endure it no longer, and cried out in agony, "Oh, God, God, save them, save them!"[1]

It is hard to tell this boy's story as he goes on from doubting childhood, through the period of half-faith, on into the time of utter unbelief, and still on to his emergence into a new faith quite his own. His real story is of his inner life, of his mental struggles. His outer

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1 African Farm p. 4

life is easily followed. He worked on the farm, tending the sheep and the ostriches and finding pleasant companionship in the two little girls who lived in the brick farmhouse. A strong affection, indeed, existed between him and the girls. Particularly did he love and admire Lyndall, the beautiful child, delicate and ethereal and possessing a quick intuition and keen understanding, so quick, so keen, that Em believed Lyndall could never make a mistake. Waldo learned early to read and read all the books that were to be found on the isolated farm.

One day a miserable creature, Bonaparte Blenkins, came to the door. "Was there ever such a red-rag-nosed thing with broken boots and crooked eyes before!"[1] Old Otto believed him when he said that he had been a prosperous man, that he was related to the Great Bonaparte and to the Duke of Wellington's Nephew, and he believed his story about shooting two bears.[2] Lyndall knew he was a liar. He lied to Tant' Sannie about the faithful Otto and succeeded in getting himself made overseer. He would have become the husband of Tant' Sannie, too, if Tant' Sannie's niece had not come to visit at the farm and proved more fair than her swinish aunt in Bonaparte Blenkins' eyes. He made further trouble for Otto, and the old German was ordered off the farm. His surprise and grief at this injustice caused him to die

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1 African Farm (1883) p. 21
2 African Farm (1883) p. 30, 31

that night of heart trouble, and when Waldo, who had been away on a few days' trip to the mill, returned, his father was dead and buried. From that time until Bonaparte made his faux pas and had to leave, he subjected Waldo to the persecutions of a bully. The boy's dearest treasure, a little model of a sheep-shearing machine, he crushed under his heel; he cruelly beat the lad and imprisoned him in the fuel house. During this time evidence that the boy had inherited his father's weakness began to appear though no one noticed the signs.

Bonaparte was followed by Gregory Rose. Rose lacked virility; he had a woman's nature in his big body. The tidiness of his room and the duster he kept folded in his table drawer bore witness to this fact. He immediately fell in love with Em, the little girl with the plain face now approaching womanhood. When, however, Lyndall returned from school where she had been for two years--Lyndall the fair, delicately moulded child, now the child-woman, still more beautiful in feature and in form, Gergory transferred his affections to her and poor Em was deserted.

Two months after Lyndall's return, a stranger found her out, the father of the child growing under her heart, and with him Lyndall stole away.

Shortly before Lyndall's disappearance Waldo had set out

to see the world--Waldo, who saw life not in the little circle immediately about him but from horizon to horizon, who could read great books with understanding and whose hungry mind had learned great truths even from the meagre material the isolated farm offered. Waldo loved Lyndall, he had always loved her. She spoke his language and he understood her. Lyndall, too, loved Waldo. To him she could speak out whatever thought she would--mind could speak to mind and be sure of a sympathetic, understanding listener. But the rough German farmhand never thought of marriage with the lovely Lyndall, and no passion stirred Lyndall's heart when she talked to Waldo. Their love was cool and calm and deep.

Gregory, whom Lyndall had planned to marry, merely because he was willing to give her his name, and would have married had not the stranger come and taken her away, was too deeply in love with the prize that had been almost his to let it be lost without making search, and soon set out to find it. In time he did find it. She was sick at an inn. Her baby had been born and died. She had refused the stranger's entreaties to marry him, and sent him away. The child-mother lay frail, very frail in body, but strong as ever in her determination never to surrender the freedom of her will, not even to the father of her baby whom she cared

for in a certain way and whose wealth was providing everything that money could supply, who loved her and whose one desire was to make this strange wilful child his wife. Gregory found her at a time when her nurse was leaving. He withdrew from the inn, shaved off his moustache, put on woman's attire, returned and took the position of nurse and cared tenderly for Lyndall during the remaining days of her life.

After her death he wrote to Em. Em received his letter just before Waldo returned after having beaten about the world for over a year. Lyndall was the one thing that filled his mind. As soon as he got into Em's warm kitchen, in out of the wild storm raging over the African plain, he seized paper and pen and wrote on and on--a letter to Lyndall telling her all that had happened to him, a drab experience indeed; ending with a drab acknowledgment of defeat, and an overwhelming desire to have somebody for his own and a yearning for a better, finer life. He had returned to the farm where he would be nearer her.

While he wrote on and on, Em fell asleep before the fire. She woke up.

"'Have you many letters to write?' she said.

'No." he answered. 'It is only one to Lyndall.'

'Waldo dear,' she said putting her hand on his, 'leave

off writing.' She put her hands over the papers he had written. 'Waldo,' she said, 'Lyndall is dead.'"[1]

One afternoon Gregory came back to the farm. Tant' Sannie had married and departed and Em had come into possession. Gregory greeted her as if nothing unusual had happened and hung up his hat in the old place beside the door. That night he told his story, and later that night Waldo dreamed he was with Lyndall and she laid one hand softly on his forehead and the other on his heart. "With a cry of suppressed agony, Waldo sprang from the bed, flung open the upper half of the door, and leaned out, breathing heavily.

"Great God! it might be only a dream, but the pain was very real."[2] The strong man drew his breath like a frightened woman. "Only a dream but the pain was very real." he muttered.

Before many days Em and Gregory agreed to marry. Em told Waldo about it, sitting on his carpenter's bench and swinging one foot while Waldo planed off long wooden curls.

"'Why is it always so, Waldo, always so?' she said. 'We long for things, and long for them, and pray for them; we would give all we have to come near to them, but we never reach them. Then, at last, too late, just when we don't want them any more, when all the sweetness is taken out of them, then they come. We don't want them then.' she said folding her hands resignedly on her little apron. After a while she added: 'I remember once, very long ago, when I was

1 African Farm (1883) p. 255

2 African Farm " p. 280

a very little girl, my mother had a work-box full of colored reels. I always wanted to play with them, but she would never let me. At last one day she said I might take the box. I was so glad I hardly knew what to do. I ran round the house and sat down with it on the back steps. But when I opened the box all the cottons were taken out.'"[1]

Em slipped down from the table and followed the Kaffir woman who had been churning into the house. Waldo felt tired; he laid down his tools and went out and sat down on the sunny side of the wagon-house. Here Death, that had been threatening, smote him suddenly. When Em came out with a glass of buttermilk for him, she thought he was asleep, "But the chickens were wiser."[2]

One would search long to find a finer piece of work than this description of Waldo's death. It is as homely and simple as it can be, but it is a master's work; it is wonderfully beautiful. When Waldo first sat down, the chickens gathered about him, but not too closely. One ventured to peck at his boot, but ran back. When he put out his hand, the chicken eyed it for a second and then fled to its mother. After a time the chickens climbed about and perched on him. One tiny yellow fellow roosted on his hand, one nestled down on his coat sleeve.[3] It was thus that Em found him.

Throughout the story the description commands attention.

1 African Farm (1883) p. 292
2 " " p. 296
3 African Farm (1883) p. 296

With true vision and an artist's hand, Olive Schreiner paints the setting of her "Story!"

"The full African moon poured down its light from the blue sky into the wide, lonely plain. The dry, sandy earth, with its coating of stunted 'karroo' bushes a few inches high, the low hills that skirted the plain, the milk-bushes with their long finger-like leaves, all were touched by a weird and an almost oppressive beauty as they lay in the white light.

"In one spot only, was the solemn monotony of the plain broken. Near the centre a small solitary 'Kopje' rose. Alone it lay there, a heap of round ironstones piled one upon another, as over some giant's grave. Here and there a few tufts of grass or small succulent plants had sprung up among its stones, and on the very summit a clump of prickly-pears lifted their thorny arms, and reflected, as from mirrors, the moonlight on their broad fleshy leaves. At the foot of the 'kopje' lay the homestead. First, the stone-walled 'sheep-kraals' and Kaffir huts; beyond them the dwelling-house--a square red-brick building with thatched roof. Even on its bare red walls, and the wooden ladder that led up to the loft, the moonlight cast a kind of dreamy beauty, and quite etherealized the low brick wall that ran before the house, and which enclosed a bare patch of sand and two

straggling sun-flowers. On the zinc roof of the great open waggon-house, on the roofs of the outbuildings that jutted from its side, the moonlight glinted with a quite peculiar brightness, 'til it seemed that every rib in the metal was of burnished silver."[1] Human nature may be the same the world over but places are different; an African farm is not like an English or an American farm, and the reader never finds himself anywhere than on an African Farm. The unusual words we like; they have a fascination for us.

Two other remarkable pictures we can just mention. One is of Lyndall about two hours before she went away with her stranger, when sitting down before the mirror in her room, she looked deep into her large dark eyes, and communed with her own soul.[2] The other also is of Lyndall; when dying, she again looked into her eyes. "The body was dead now, but the soul, clear and unclouded, looked forth."[3]

The characters, like the setting and the words that belong to it, are unusual. Of Tant' Sannie we are told that on the moonlight night when the story opens, she dreamed bad dreams, "not of ghosts and devils that so haunted her waking thoughts, but only of the sheep's trotters she had eaten for her supper that night. She dreamed that one stuck fast in her throat and she rolled her huge form from side to

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1 African Farm (1883) p. 1, 2

2 " " " p. 232, 233

3 African Farm (1883) p. 278

side and snorted horribly."[1] Here is the whole truth about Otto in whom the author pictures her father: "He stood out at the Kraals in the blazing sun, explaining to two Kaffir boys the approaching end of the world. The boys, as they cut the cakes of dung, winked at each other and worked as slowly as they possibly could; but the German never saw it."[2] We have no doubt of Gregory Rose's ability to play well the part of a woman after we read these words: "All was scrupulously neat and clean for Gregory kept a little duster folded in the corner of his table-drawer, just as he had seen his mother do, and every morning before he went out he said his prayers and made his bed, and dusted the table and the legs of the chairs and even the pictures on the wall and the gun-rack."[3]

Of the people on this African farm, Lyndall and Waldo are extraordinary, but each is true to his type and each one, except Bonaparte Blenkins, is presented with infinite care for every detail. Tant' Sannie, fat, lazy, ignorant, rolling on her bed with all her clothes on except her shoes, is always gross. Em is always plain and as useful as her name signifies. Bonaparte Blenkins is a consummate hypocrite, but too dull to keep himself out of trouble. Miss Schreiner agrees that he is not artistically drawn; he is, she says, roughly painted from the outside, not sympathetically from

1 African Farm (1883) p. 2
2 " " " p. 5
3 African Farm (1883) p. 155

the inside.[1] In Gregory we have a well-drawn character. He has had some opportunities and he believes that they make the man. It was not, however, only the beauty and delicacy of Lyndall that completely won him; he felt the power of her understanding and was awed by it. In the background of the story are native Africans; they chatter and laugh, work, hide under the Karroo bushes and squat in the sun before their huts.

To appreciate the author's stand in religion and the trials and persecutions which she suffered, first, because of her doubt, and, second, because of her firm and open stand against the accepted religion of her family, one must remember that she was the daughter of a Presbyterian missionary, whose passion was to save the heathen. This passion never grew cold, he never complained of the hard work in the wilderness; he never ceased to find his greatest satisfaction in serving Hottentots and Kaffirs; and he never questioned his belief. His was the childlike, unwavering faith of old Otto. His little daughter, on the contrary, began to question early in life and Waldo's religious experience was her own. In time the Bible came to mean less to her than Gibbons, Goethe, or John Stuart Mill. Her belief included a God, but a God very different from the common idea; she believed in immortality, but in immortality as Waldo saw it.

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1 Letters p. 13

When a child she had suffered because of lost souls, the thousands upon thousands that went down to destruction, and she could accept no explanation of God's unjust treatment of the Blacks who came to her father in their distress; her heart rebelled. Why did God allow it? She, like Waldo and Lyndall, was sensitive and understood many situations to which most children of her age would have been blind. This is what she writes in one paragraph of "The Story of an African Farm":

"The girl knit her brows. Perhaps her thoughts made a longer journey than the German dreamed of; for, mark you, the old dream little how their words and lives are texts and studies to the generation that shall succeed them. Not what we are taught, but what we see, makes us, and the child gathers the food on which the adult feeds to the end."[1]

This is autobiography, and the chapter on "The Seasons of the Soul's Life"[2] is autobiography as well. In the first season, infancy, material things rule, in the second, the spiritual and intellectual take their place. At a later season unpleasantly shrewd questions persist in the child's mind which the grown-up people satisfy only more or less. In the fourth season we ask our questions louder and the answers do not satisfy. Then a new time comes. Three courses are open to us: to go mad, to die, or go to sleep.

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1 African Farm (1883) p. 32
2 " " " Part II Chap. I

We sleep, and our dream saves us from madness. Then a last new time, the sixth season, the time of waking--the beautiful dream has gone. We have had two gods, one handed down to us by our fathers, one created out of our own ideals. Now we have no God. We get acquainted with nature, we work unceasingly and do not go mad.

Out of all this hard thinking--for we must remember that Olive Schreiner was not twenty when she wrote her great book--came the wonderfully beautiful allegory about truth, which has its place in the development of the belief of Olive Schreiner, and this development, to repeat, she gives as the experience of Waldo. This allegory is published in "The African Farm", by itself, and in the little volume called "Dreams".

In the story of a hunter desiring to capture a vast bird, the author shows us a man seeking for Truth. The hunter had spied this bird with silver wings and had sought it in the forest, by lakes and among rushes. He sought, deserted by his companions who did not understand what the glimpse of the great white bird meant to him. At last, upon desolate heights, after all his years had been spent in searching, "he raised his shrivelled hand to his eyes.--

"Then slowly from the white sky above, through the sill air, came something falling, falling, falling. Softly it fluttered down, and dropped on the breast of the dying man. He felt it with his hands. It was a feather. He died

holding it."[1]

It is a wonderful story of how Truth comes to humanity and great, indeed, is that person's gift to the human race, who by a life of devotion to a great purpose succeeds in finding one feather of new truth.

That night after Waldo waked from his vivid dream of Lyndall with the sharp pain in his breast, he felt he could not go on living without her; it would be unendurable for the old changes of nature to continue day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest "if in none of them all she had no part."[2] In bitterness of spirit he cried out, "Oh, God! God! for a Hereafter!" The Bible Christian said to him, "You shall see her again if her name was found written in the Lamb's Book of Life; if not, she shall be cast into a lake of burning fire, which is the second death."[3] His Lyndall's knee was unbent, she said no prayer to God, she asked no mercy, she repented of no sin. Waldo laughed low. He had long ceased to listen to "the hellish voice."

The nineteenth-century Christian could not satisfy him. In despair he flung open the door and walked out into the starlight. He walked and dreamed, "and, at last, as he walked there his soul passed down the steps of contemplation into that vast land where there is always peace; that land where the soul, gazing long, loses all consciousness of its little self, and almost feels its hand on the old mystery of

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1 African Farm (1883) p. 148

2 " " (1883) p. 281

3 African Farm (1883) p. 282

Universal Unity that surrounds it."[1]

"'No death, no death,' he muttered; 'there is that which never dies--which abides. It is but the individual that perishes, the whole remains. It is the organism that vanishes, the atoms are there. It is but the man that dies, the Universal Whole of which he is part reworks him into its inmost self. Ah, what matters the man's day be short! that the sunrise sees him and the sunset sees his grave; that of which he is but the breath has breathed him forth and drawn him back again. That abides--we abide! '"[2]

When in 1892 Olive Schreiner wrote a statement of her religion, she said "If I must put it into words I would say: The Universe is One, and It Lives; or, if you put it into older phraseology, I would say: There is Nothing but God." "When", she says elsewhere in this letter, "at fourteen or fifteen when I began to study physical science, this agonizing disorganization--the impossibility of reconciling the direct perception, from which I could never quite shake myself free, with what I was taught--ended for me. Since then religion has been to me one unending joy."[3]

This gives us proof that Waldo's experience was the author's own. With what holding up of hands in holy horror her religious belief was received by her late Victorian readers, we can easily imagine. No one, however, can doubt the sincerity of every word she put down in her great story.

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1 African Farm (1883) p. 282

2 " " " p. 285

3 Life p. 218

And it is not because of the faith that is set forth, interesting as this may be, that we are held, but because Waldo undergoes such a genuine struggle and fights his way out to a satisfactory solution.

In this novel, also, Olive Schreiner takes her stand for the freedom of woman. To her there was something so sacred in the union of man and woman that the taking of the marriage vow was a mere bagatelle. It is not strange, then, that in her story, the seventeen-year-old Lyndall should give herself to the man whom she thought she truly loved, and then should refuse to marry him when she found out her mistake. This situation was shocking to the nineteenth century reader and is equally so to many today. Olive Schreiner did not think lightly of marriage. She believed any marriage was wrong unless there was a perfect union of sympathy and interest. Believing in this perfect union, she scorned a union with a meaningless ceremony, public purjury, and a hasty divorce sanctioned by the law.

Into Lyndall's mouth, Olive Schreiner puts her opinion of woman's position, what it is, and what it ought to be. As it is, she rebels against it. On the other hand, she thinks to be one of those women born in the future will not be to be born branded. To man the world says Work; to woman it says Seem. To man it says, Through your powers you shall gain what you desire; to woman it says, Strength shall not help you, nor knowledge, nor labor. You shall gain what

men gain, but by other means. Lyndall declared that women were bandaged, compressed by convention. She hated the fact that she could step into ease and competence at any time, but if she asked to be a doctor, a lawyer, or to tunnel a mountain, to create a work of art, she would be refused. Her idea was that since women bear and have the training of children in their plastic years, they should be allowed every opportunity for self-development; their advance means the advance of the race. If woman barters her power for ease and is content to bear children in return for comfortable competence, she sacrifices her freedom and throws away a certain divine power intrusted to her; and she does miserably her one great work. She argued that "when the time comes when love is no more bought and sold, when it is not a means of making bread, when each woman's life is filled with earnest, independent labor, then love will come to her, a strange sudden sweetness breaking in upon her earnest work; not sought for, but found."[1]

It would be a mistake to think that "The Story of an African Farm" is a mere container for the author's opinions on religion, on woman's place, and other topics. This is in no sense true. Waldo's and Lyndall's ideas are an integral part of them, coloring and controlling their lives. Their convictions grow out of their struggles and their struggles come through seeing. Because these two characters,

1 African Farm (1883) p. 180

these two young people, are palpitating with desire to know the truth, they learn, they build up their opinions, they live and they die, and the novel that tells their story is deep and searching.

The author of such a book could not remain unsought. Among her new acquaintances was Havelock Ellis, who became her "oldest and best friend". To Ellis her vivid personality, her beautiful eyes, her powerful intellect, and independent judgment, revealing itself in her clear, logical speech, her passion for any cause she espoused, and even her eccentricities marked her as a person of genius.[1] Arthur Symonds, critic and poet, gained a similar impression of her, when he sought her out one "wet Whit Monday and the two had a long never-to-be-forgotten talk." "I can only thank God", he wrote, "for those eight hours; how can I record them ? Certainly one can never forget how the hours went on and the light decreased in the dismal sky, and the room darkened.--And at last she rose, lit the gas in the passage outside the door, and we talked on and on, till I said the inevitable good-night, and looking at my watch outside the door I saw it was midnight."[2] She met Gladstone, who reminded her of a Bengal tiger because of a sly look in his eyes, Canon MacColl, Bret Harte, Herbert Spencer, whose "First Principles", read in the desolation of Klein Ganna Hoek, put her under

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1 Life p. 160-164
2 Life p. 184-185

such an intellectual debt to its author, and was actually in a cab on her way to meet Browning when sickness made it necessary for her to return home.

Because in the English climate Miss Schreiner could never be well, and because the only way to get relief from dreadful suffering was to change her quarters, she was continually moving about. Moreover, she could not tell how long the people with whom she lodged could endure her restless pacing back and forth with heavy step and her excited talking to herself as it had been her habit to do since she was a little girl at the Mission Station in Wittenbergen. Ellis attributes the fact that she never published another great novel to "her serious illness and emotional strains during her first two years in England", and, when he denies the charge made by some persons that she feared she couldn't write a second book as good as the first,[1] we quite agree with him. "From Man to Man" was well under way and coming as it did from her very heart, as, in fact, all her writings did, and being a long and weighty novel, it must have been full of hope and promise to her. Although she knew that the Victorian age was hardly ready to receive a story that sympathetically pictures the life of a prostitute, even this would not have hindered her from pleading the prostitute's case and urging her women readers to take a more kindly, more reasonable attitude toward their erring sisters. It

1 Life p. 160

was true, as her friends claim, that during this period ill health made impossible the sustained effort necessary for finishing and polishing her great story.

The dampness of the English climate finally caused her so much suffering that she sought relief in Italy, finding a retreat at Alassio near the Reviera. Here she shook off her asthma and applied herself to hard work. "Dreams" was prepared for publication (1891), a little volume of eleven dreams and allegories including "The Hunter", first printed in the "African Farm". It was Miss Schreiner's practice to give her theories and ideas a picturesque interpretation. Although the reader may not always be sure that he sees just what the writer intended, no more and no less, yet, if he understands Olive Schreiner's theories and beliefs, he cannot lag far behind or go far astray. These writings are of remarkable spiritual insight. In strength and beauty of diction they are almost Biblical and some are truly poetic.

After Olive Schreiner's death in 1921 a second volume, entitled "Stories, Dreams, and Allegories", a collection of all "her unprinted or uncollected writings", was published. These stories and dreams can be classified in four groups; those on the woman question, those on religion and the quest for truth, children's stories, and those growing out of the Boer War. "The Buddist's Priest's Wife" is Lyndall's

story in another dress; "The Sunlight Lay across my Bed" is the account of a soul's wandering through Hell and Heaven and finally being sent back to Earth to find there the happiness for which it was seeking; "Three Dreams in a Desert" sums up the whole argument of "Women and Labor", one of Miss Schreiner's later books.

After nine years filled with all the excitement that a change from one of the most remote parts of the world to the very center of life and civilization could bring, after alternating periods of suffering and health, of discouragement and the satisfaction of seeing "The Story of an African Farm" in print and hearing it praised by those whose opinion she valued most highly, Olive Schreiner returned to South Africa.

From Cape Town she hurried off to Grahamstown to see her mother. A terrible attack of asthma compelled her to seek a dry climate and eventually she established herself at Matjesfontein, a railway station about two hundred miles from Cape Town. She occupied a little cottage most meagerly furnished and ate her meals at the railroad restaurant. The long stretches of Karoo--"Such a sense of wild exhilaration and freedom comes to me when I walk over the Karoo",[1] she wrote at this time--and the open veld without tree or bush furnished the space and solitude for which she yearned. The up-train in the morning on its way

1 Life p. 199

to the Diamond Fields and the down-train at night carrying its load of passengers to Cape Town brought her mail regularly and kept her in touch with the world. When loneliness began to weigh upon her, she could flee to her brother Will's home in Cape Town. Here she often visited the House of Parliament where, because of her keen interest in the affairs of South Africa, she followed the debates and was occasionally moved to publish her opinion on some question. She met the ablest men of the Colony and made many new friends, Cecil Rhodes being one of the best known. Rhodes she counted a genius and at first admired him. Later she refused to recognize him as a friend and felt a strange fear of him. So much seemed to hang on the will of this man. The Strap Bill, which allowed the flogging of native servants, was under debate in the Cape Parliament, and Rhodes and "other talented and wealthy Englishmen", as she wrote, "were voting" for it, and "personal ambition and the greed for wealth and power showed at every turn."[1] The Chartered Company was forcing privileges and stealing land and rights from the Boers and the Natives, and Rhodes himself was guilty of a transaction that in Miss Schreiner's judgment was "flagrantly and shamelessly dishonorable."[2] Will Schreiner admired Rhodes exceedingly and it was not until after the Jameson Raid (1895) that he began to get his eyes open to Rhodes's real self, and it was two years before he was willing to

1 Letters p. 205
2 Life p. 215

denounce him.

The works of Miss Schreiner's pen at Matjesfontein were the revision of certain dreams, work on a "big" novel, and "Stray Thoughts on South Africa". Of the latter she wrote, "I am copying out that book on South Africa, but really everything in heaven and earth! Sex, woman, the relation of superior to inferior races, the future of the human race etc., etc., etc. It has come straight from my heart. But will anyone else understand it from my standpoint? Put it away in the box with my other mss.! That's my temptation."[1] And that is exactly what she did and "Stray Thoughts" was not published until after her death.

When the railroad was opened as far as Bloemfontein, Olive Schreiner, now the great woman of the country, was present, and in October, 1892, she attended the South African and International Exhibition at Kimberley. In December of this year, while visiting her old friends, the Cawoods, at Ganna Hoek, she met Samuel Cron Cronwright, the man she afterward married. He had read her great novel, had admired it, and was eager to meet its author. From the first he was strongly attracted by her. Miss Schreiner was at this time thirty-eight years old, and had acquired certain marks of age due to many hours of extreme suffering, but she possessed still her great power to attract and entertain. Her friendship with Mr. Cronwright ripened quickly and their

1 Letters p. 223

correspondence began.

Before her visit to Ganna Hoek and her meeting with Mr. Cronwright, she had decided to visit England again, but, the time of sailing not having been set, she postponed her journey until May, 1893, more than a year later. Her letters to Mr. Cronwright lead us to suppose that her mind was occupied in deciding whether or not she wanted to marry. With her individual ideas about marriage and a woman's independence, it is small wonder that she thought long on the question. She returned to Cape Town in October, and the following February they were married, he taking the name of Cronwright-Schreiner, and went to live at Krantz Plaats, the farm he was managing. From the day of their marriage he devoted himself to his gifted wife and their happiness in each other never flagged, though he frankly states that he had to pay the price of marrying a genius who could not see the practical side of life.[1] She was unable to write unless the circumstances were altogether favorable, and though he tried hard to help her and twice sacrificed his own career to this end, she accomplished very little. It was soon evident that Krantz Plaats did not agree with her, and it became a question whether husband and wife should live apart for half the year or whether he should give up the farm and accompany her to that place where she could throw off the asthma and work.

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1 Life p. 269, 271

The latter course was decided upon and the Cronwright-Schreiners took a house, called the Homestead, on the outskirts of Kimberley. Here they lived plainly and quietly for two years. Olive was free from asthma and very well, and here their child, which lived only a few hours, was born. In spite of every opportunity, however, to finish "Stray Thoughts on South Africa" and to revise her long novel ("From Man to Man"), nothing was finished, nothing went to the publishers, and Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner's funds got low. At length the conduct of the English in the Transvaal roused Mrs. Schreiner to the writing of her second novel, "Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland". Having heard of deeds against the Blacks and the Boers sanctioned by Rhodes, she in her story presents Peter Halkett as one of the English youths who were working for the Chartered Company, and openly and boldly denounces Rhodes and his methods and expresses her detestation of the men who "sucked the dust from his feet".[1] For a frontispiece she used the photograph of a hanging, a terrible picture showing some negros suspended from the branches of a tree and others about to be pulled up, and a group of Englishmen standing by.

Trooper Peter Halkett found himself alone at night; he was lost on the veld, he was hungry; he was oppressed by the thick darkness that rested upon the African plain. He climbed a kopje, built a fire, and was thinking about his

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1 Letters p. 216

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mother and seeing again the little home in England and the ducks crawling under the gate, and the picture of Christ that hung on the schoolroom wall. Suddenly he was startled by a sound. Footsteps! Someone was climbing up the rocks! A stranger joined Peter at his fire. Peter tried to decide who the stranger was. He was not one of the Soudanese Rhodes had brought from the North. He was a Jew. Yes, he knew what it was to go without grub, to go without it for forty days and forty nights. No, he was not in the employ of the Chartered Company. Peter told this stranger about his life, about his work with a prospector who had hooked onto the Company somehow, about his two colored women. Peter stopped here in his story. "You remind me of my mother", he said. When Peter asked if the stranger knew about the hanging of the niggers as spies, his answer was, "I was there." "I'll shoot as many as you like if they'll run," said Peter, "but they mustn't be tied up. Talk about Cecil Rhodes, you can do what you like provided you don't get him into trouble."[1]

Then the stranger took his turn to question. "Simon Peter Halkett, if you should obtain those lands or form that company, what would it profit you?" "Who is greatest, he who serves or he who is served?" "Who gave the Chartered Company the land?" "Did England give you the people also?" "Who is a rebel? Who is a Christian?"[2]

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1 Trooper Peter Halkett (1897) p. 38

2 " " " " p. 40-46

Peter was moved by the words of the stranger; he saw values, the right and the wrong, as he had never seen them before, and in all sincerity he sighed and said that he was tired of the Chartered Company. "In that small spot", bade the stranger, "where alone on earth your will rules, bring there into being the kingdom today."[1]

In part two the scene changes to a camp. Peter is on guard before the captain's tent, and a nigger is tied to a stunted tree nearby. Peter has been ordered to shoot the nigger at sunrise. That night when he is released from duty, he ties up his supper in his handkerchief and whets his knife. In the night he crawls out of his tent, cuts the "reims" that bound the nigger and gives him the food. Something goes wrong. Confusion follows and Peter is shot. The effect of his deed and his death is felt in all the camp.

The story is simple yet adequate. The stranger's questions and answers are trenchant steel. Although his conversation at the last is too prolonged, it is in keeping. Here, as in all of Olive Schreiner's works, most careful attention has been given to details. The picture of the camp and the account of the way Peter's death roused the men who were stifling their better feelings is gripping. The author handled her story with the greatest restraint and was so sure of the truth of everything she stated or implied that the account reads like a passage of Scripture. The

1 Trooper Peter Halkett (1897) p. 93

influence of such a story written at such a time can never be measured. "The book I have written has cost me more than anything I ever wrote," said Olive Schreiner in a letter, "and I am broadening my back already for the Chartered Company's attacks."[1] But these attacks never came.

After the Schreiners returned from England where they had gone to see about publishing "Peter Halkett", they lived now at Johannesburg, now at Hanover, and now at De Aar, Mrs. Schreiner's asthma forcing them to go from one place to another. She was at Hanover during the Boer War. It is easy to understand how one so sensitive to the right and wrong of the struggle must have suffered during this strife. Olive Schreiner loved England and nothing could change her love; it, therefore, grieved her to the heart to see her beloved England so unjustly depriving the Boers, whom she loved hardly less, of the freedom they had suffered so much to gain. She knew the story of their long painful treks; she knew the great price they had paid for land and rights that were being forced from them. Her statement that it would take 150,000 English soldiers to beat the Transvaal had been laughed at, but results showed that no one had estimated the cost more truly than she.

The strain of the war was terrible upon her, but yet during these years she did some writing, including several papers on topics of the day and "Woman and Labor". The

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1 Letters p. 223

theme of this book is that men and women must advance side by side. If woman tends to become parasitic, man's progress is likewise retarded. The book traces the history of women through the ages. In primitive days they built the huts, prepared the food, dressed the skins for clothing, and bore and reared the children. Later when constant vigilance was no longer necessary for safety, man did the planting and woman's work was done indoors. Then there was the time when the ladies of the great castles were busy with their work of superintending their servants, who must spin and weave and make the clothing for hundreds of retainers, and prepare their food. At a later period machinery took this work away from women, and when Olive Schreiner was writing, we had reached a time when woman seemed to have no assigned task beyond the bearing and rearing of children. As Mrs. Schreiner looked out from her home in South Africa, as she saw society during her sojourns in England and Italy, she was filled with apprehension. Women, as a whole, she believed were coming to be mere playthings, parasites. They were demanding lives of ease; they were without earnest employment. Daughters were growing up in luxury and planning to marry the men who could afford to support them in luxury. To society they gave only their child-bearing power. Mrs. Schreiner believed that man and woman should be on a par,

both engaged in healthful, useful occupation. Only in this way can woman fulfil her duty to mankind. Side by side man and woman could then advance, and for every step the woman advances the human race advances three.

Olive Schreiner holds several unusual ideas. She believes that husband and wife ought to be financially independent of each other, and thus woman would never become either the slave of her husband or a drag on him. Mrs. Schreiner believes in marriage, but she would, by making all women independent, change conditions so that unions would be for love and not for expediency. She believes that society is to blame for prostitution in that it does not provide all women with wholesome labor and a legitimate way to satisfy natural cravings.

Though "Woman and Labor" is not a scientific treatise, Mrs. Schreiner works out her ideas logically and with breadth of understanding, common sense and sympathy. She was a sufficient student of history, sociology, and biology to present sound arguments, and her style is clear and flowing.

The outbreak of the World War caught Mrs. Schreiner in Europe, where she had gone for that temporary relief that change of location always brought, and she was forced to spend the whole period of the war in London. Bronchitis

now accompanied the attacks of asthma, and the poor little woman, too sick and weak to take part in war activities, yearning for all the splendid youths who had gone into service, and persecuted because of her name, could only endure in silence. Her relatives and friends in England did what they could, and her husband did not miss a boat in sending letters, but there was the fact of the terrible, terrible war.

As soon as possible after peace was declared, Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner joined his wife. He had not seen her for over six years and was shocked to note how she had aged. Her condition was so delicate, he did not think it wise for her to try another winter in England. Accordingly a month after his arrival she took passage for South Africa, her husband intending to follow after a brief interval of change and rest. The trip was as usual; Mrs. Schreiner at times suffering and oppressed by the heat of the tropics, and again feeling bright and gay. In Cape Town she established herself pleasantly in a boarding house near relatives and friends to await the return of her husband. On the night of December 10, 1920, after a busy and happy day that included a visit from her doctor in the late afternoon, she slipped quietly and without a struggle out of this life. Her heart, overtaxed for so many years, ceased to beat, and her beautiful and restless spirit was set free.

On Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner's return, her body, together with that of her baby and her favorite dog Nita, was moved to a sarcophagus on the summit of Buffels Kop, a part of the farm where she had begun her married life. The plateau on which the sarcophagus is built has an elevation of 4,000 feet and offers one of the finest and most typical views of the South African country. The tomb bears this simple inscription:[1]

Olive Schreiner

Cronwright-Schreiner

Baby

and Nita

Of her religion as theory we have spoken under "The Story of an African Farm" for Waldo's belief was hers, but something remains to be said about her religion as a practice, as reflected in her life. She seemed to have no vindictiveness of spirit whatever. To cause another to suffer would have been to bring worse suffering upon herself. She could agree to disagree with relatives and friends on vital questions but she could not quarrel with them. She often spoke out her convictions with great eloquence and power, but she was never angry with the person who failed to agree. As a little girl, she had not

1 Life p. 401

believed what she heard her elders preach, and to understand this strange child one should read "The Ticking Clock".[1] It is the boy Waldo's story retold, and yet we have a different child and a somewhat different reaction. When Olive accepted a position as governess, she always made the agreement that she was not to teach religion. "What", asked Mrs. Martin after Olive had been with the Martins at Ratel Hoek for a year, "is your religion?" When she replied that she had no religion, Mrs. Martin insisted that she must have and a better one than theirs because the children had improved so much since she came to them.[2] Indeed her religion was a religion of thoughtfulness for others, both individuals and peoples; it demanded that she find the path of true service, that she follow it, and joy in service. No bitter cries were raised, no hatreds were harbored, but rather her affection was kept pure and gloving, and her hope never died. We can well speak of the beautiful spirit of Olive Schreiner.

Since her death her husband has prepared for publication a volume of "Stories, Dreams, and Allegories" (1922), "Stray Thoughts on South Africa" (1923), and the "big" novel, "From Man to Man" (1927), and edited her letters. Of the stories and dreams we have already spoken in connection with her first volume of Dreams (1890), and having set forth her views on South Africa, we do not need

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1 Life Appendix C.

2 Life p. 121

to review the stand she took in "Stray Thoughts" on important measures. Besides this, she presents her plea that justice be done the Hottentots, the Bantus, and the Kaffirs, and she declares that the race-problem is the great problem of South Africa. She denounces the injustice that has been heaped on the Boer by a stronger nation, and by the Boer on the Native. In her sympathetic review of history and what was then the position of the Boer and of the Native her expression is occasionally epigrammatic. "A man can see God as nearly face to face from the front box of his wagon as from the steps of a queen's palace."[1] "A train is better than an ox-wagon only when it carries better men."[2] "In the highly cultured citizen we rightly demand as a primal and common virtue, breadth of human sympathy and Catholic impartiality of intellectual judgment, unwarped by personal interest."[3]

Again and again in her letters Olive Schreiner spoke of her "big" novel. This has only recently appeared and is so timely in its subject matter that it is today barred from the Boston market, as "The Story of an African Farm" would doubtless be if the publication of that great novel had been postponed. To its author such action would be unbelievable. Her most pronounced quality is her tremendous sincerity, and no one ever labored harder on a work of love than Olive Schreiner did on this late novel.

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1 Thoughts on S. A. p. 32[illegible]
2 " " " " p. 32[illegible]

plead with women everywhere to be more merciful to each other, to be more forgiving to their fallen sisters. Often their stain could be removed and their self-respect regained. Great is the sin of that woman who refuses to give help when her sister cries. Olive Schreiner chose her chief character, Bertie, with infinite care, she drew her with absolute truth, and there was no time when Bertie would not have grasped any hand stretched out to help. But those who would help, could not, and those who could, whispered "unclean" and drew back. No hand reached her until too late. Rebecca, Bertie's sister, is an equally fine portrait; she is as brilliant of mind as Bertie is dull, as interesting as Bertie is physically beautiful. Rebecca's understanding kept her love for her sister pure and strong, but Bertie had disappeared and all effort to find her "little" sister, whom the family always affectionately and with pathetic truth called Baby Bertie, was unsuccessful.

When the scene of this story is in Africa, whether on the farm or at Cape Town, the chapters have the beauty peculiar to Olive Schreiner's writing. When, however, the scene changes to England, that peculiar beauty is lost. Nothing brightens the sordidness, Bertie's experiences are not so convincing, and yet we feel sure that the author is no less sure of her facts. When we return from the "Rains in London" to the "Fireflies in the Dark" of

an African night, we breathe a sigh of pleasure. We return to a hot night where among the lilies, the roses, and the carnations of Rebecca's garden, the fireflies glinted, where among the children gathered about the table was Sartje, "a little, yellow-brown, frizzle-haired girl", whom Rebecca had adopted as a baby five years before.[1] The reader does not need to be told why the little dark wizen face of the girl bore a decided resemblance to the fair face of Rebecca's youngest son. Into the minds of her sons she had already begun to instil the truths of the great race problem of South Africa and a sense of their responsibility to the weaker race.

Although "From Man to Man" is the last book to be published it is interesting to note that the story is covered in one of the earliest "dreams", "The White Rose". This novel has power and both broadens and strengthens the foundation of the author's fame, but raises her fame no higher for its height is still marked by "The Story of an African Farm."

Olive Schreiner, as you in your book on Africa apostrophized the Boer Oom and Tante, so we would apostrophize you. You were a woman untrammeled by convention, you went your way as Truth guided, you went fearlessly; with the eye of a seer you saw life in dreams and in allegories, and you gave your dreams and stories to the world;

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1 From Man to Man p. 390

you conceived great characters, Waldo and Lyndall, Baby Bertie and Rebecca. You loved your country and its people and would have dealt justly with the Native, the Boer, and the Englishman if you could have made your arguments prevail; you spoke boldly against those who would argue that might makes right. You shared with the world the beauties of your wide-reaching African plains and skies, mountains and rivers, and you taught your reader their nomenclature. After your life of sorrows, joys, failures and rewards, you lie in death on one of Africa's most beautiful plateaus where the flaming aloe blooms about your tomb. Beauty, height, and the great stretches of veld and sky belong to you.

Olive Schreiner

Books read in preparation of this paper:

A

<u>The Works of Olive Schreiner</u>

1. The Story of an African Farm (1883)

2. Dreams (1890)

3. Dream Life and Real Life (1893)

4. Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland (1897)

5. The Political Situation, a paper written by Olive and Samuel Cron Cronwright-Schreiner (1895)

6. Woman and Labor (1911)

7. Dreams, Stories, and Allegories (1922)

8. Stray Thoughts on South Africa (1923)

9. From Man to Man (1927)

10. An extract from Undine, Appendix G in The Life of Olive Schreiner (1924)

11. The Child's Day (Harper's Magazine, November 1926)

12. The Letters of Olive Schreiner---Edited by S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner (1924)

13. Wasteland in Mashonaland (1921)

14. War Century vol. 88: 344-5

15. The Native Problem in South Africa Review of Reviews, vol. 39: 324-5

B

1. S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner, Life of Olive Schreiner (1923)

C

Magazine Articles and History

1. Phillis Bottome, "The Life of Olive Schreiner", a review--

Contemporary Review vol. 125: 624-630

2. G. Lowes Dickinson, Olive Schreiner, The Living Age, vol. 321: 1203-5

3. ----------The Future of Woman as Olive Schreiner Sees It, Current Literature, vol. 50: 515-17

4. ----------Olive Schreiner.
Chronicle and Comment

Bookman vol. 10: 519-20

5. ----------Bookman vol. 33: 120

6. ----------Bookman vol. 42: 369-70

7. "The Life of Olive Schreiner", a Husband's Tribute to a Woman of Genius, Current Opinion, vol. 14: 34-6

8. ----------Olive Schreiner--The Living Age, vol. 308: 493-5

9. ----------Olive Schreiner--Nation, vol. 11: 769

10. Laurence M. Larson, History of England and the British Commonwealth (1924) Chaps. on S. A.

11. S. G. Millin, South Africans (1927)

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